A wisPACT Success Story

Alumna now thriving in Wisconsin rural practice

For Chelsea Schummer, MPAS, PA-C, completing her education in the region where she hoped to practice was a smart move.

The 2016 UW–Madison Physician Assistant (PA) Program alumna was one of the first graduates of the Wisconsin Physician Assistant Community-Based Track (wisPACT), a program that educates PAs for practice in northern Wisconsin.

Today, Schummer is a family medicine PA at two Aspirus clinics located in rural communities approximately 75 miles northwest of Wausau: Prentice (population 660) and Phillips (population 1,447).

She puts her education to good use every day, providing primary care for patients of all ages and their families—work she truly enjoys.

Thanks to her wisPACT experience, she understands the challenges of rural medicine, was immediately comfortable in her clinics and had the foundations of a referral network in place. It’s made building her practice all that much easier.
PA Program Medical Director John Beasley, MD, to Retire

After 10 years as the PA Program’s medical director, and a phenomenal career that spans over four decades, John Beasley, MD, will retire this June.

**Far-Reaching Contributions**

In addition to serving as medical director, Dr. Beasley has given numerous program lectures, helped with hands-on student training and developed the family medicine module.

He also collaborated with PA Program Director Virginia Snyder, PhD, PA-C, on the program’s transition to a master’s degree program.

“Dr. Beasley’s contributions to our curriculum, to innovative approaches to teaching, and to faculty and student mentoring have been far-reaching and foundational to what our program has become,” notes Dr. Snyder.

**The ‘Wealth’ We Received**

A professor in the University of Wisconsin Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, Dr. Beasley has also received the Wisconsin Academy of Family Physicians’ first Lifetime Achievement Award and the American Academy of Family Physicians’ highest honor, the Thomas W. Johnson Award.

“Little did we know of the wealth we would receive when Dr. Beasley accepted our invitation to join us as medical director,” reflects Dr. Snyder. “Now we do fully understand, and we could not feel more fortunate to have shared this time with him.”

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**Schummer, con’t.**

extended hours for patients who are in school or who work late in the afternoon.

“It’s really fun getting to know patients on a personal level,” she notes. “In family practice, it’s especially important to take all aspects of [a patient’s] life into consideration, not just their physical medical complaint.”

**Benefits of a Local Program**

As one of four students in the inaugural wisPACT program, Schummer was part of a close-knit, Wausau-based group throughout her PA education.

Because of the program’s small size, she had substantial opportunities for one-on-one training, especially during skills labs.

She also rotated with many local providers and health care organizations, and learned how travel distances and socioeconomic status can impact patients in rural communities.

“We did a lot of work at the Aspirus residency clinic, and that was a phenomenal experience,” she reflects.

“Building that network has certainly helped me build my practice and build a rapport with my patients.”

Great work, Chelsea! We’re proud of you and what do you do for your patients and community!

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Above: Schummer (on right) with PA Program Director Virginia Snyder, PhD, PA-C, at graduation in May 2016.
Catching Up with Virginia Wagner, MS, PA-C

Many alumni learned about wound care and suturing from Virginia Wagner, MS, PA-C, a 1979 alumna and long-time PA Program teaching collaborator.

We recently caught up with Wagner, who retired last year after working for 30 years as a PA in the emergency department at Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin (CHW).

Hands-on Teaching

Wagner now helps in the program’s History and Physical Examination for Physician Assistants course, teaching hands-on techniques and testing skill mastery.

“Even though students have a lecture and online examples, it’s different when you’re doing [an examination] yourself,” she notes.

She still teaches in the suture workshops, and also grades second-year students’ topic-based history and physical examinations.

A Way to Give Back

Teaching comes easy to Wagner, who also precepted PA students at CHW. She’s particularly struck by how technology provides students with new, better ways to learn.

She’s also glad to make a difference for students in a program—and profession—that was brand-new when she started out.

“I was very happy I went that route,” she says, reflecting on her own PA education. “[Teaching] is a way to give back to the new students.”

Thank you, Ginny, for your years of service to the program!

Above: Alumna and long-time teaching collaborator Virginia Wagner, MS, PA-C, still volunteers in several PA Program courses.

Preceptor Q&A: Jennifer Black, MSPAS, PA-C

Jennifer Black, MSPAS, PA-C, works in urgent care and emergency medicine at Ministry Good Samaritan Hospital, a critical-access hospital in Merrill, Wisconsin.

Q: Why did you start precepting? The preceptors I had in PA school had a profound impact on how I practice and helped shape the provider I am today. I thought it was important to provide current PA students with opportunities similar to those. I began precepting when I worked in family medicine 11 years ago and wanted to continue when I transitioned to emergency medicine.

Q: What skills do you focus on? I try to encourage students to get involved with as many aspects of care as possible, so they understand what it takes to care for patients in this setting and be a trusted member of the health care team. Initially, I focus on history and physical exams and determining who is “sick vs not sick.” I then progress to ordering and interpreting tests, formulating and adjusting a treatment plan, and educating patients on their diagnoses.

“Precepting students reminds me why I love being a PA.”

Q: What do you enjoy most about precepting? It is so rewarding to see students apply what they have been taught and gain confidence in their skills. Precepting students reminds me why I love being a PA, encourages me to not take what I know for granted and inspires me to keep practicing, knowing that the future of the profession is bright.

In a critical-access hospital, we don’t have certain equipment or specialists on site. This provides opportunities for students to treat certain types of patients and perform procedures that would otherwise be completed by the consulting provider. I strive to get students to identify their strengths and weaknesses—to “know what they know and know what they don’t know.”
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